567 now the circle of Tenkodogo constituted a reservoir (figuratively called lambagré, "cotton reserve") from which the warriors and vassals of the emperor brought back hundreds of young slaves. This was because Garango recognized no authority; it was dependent neither on the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou nor on the king of Tenkodogo. Tradition has it that the warriors of the Mossi chiefs were always surprising the people of Garango on market days. The memory of these raids is why, even today the markets at Garango [366] are open only from six in the morning until noon.

The Mossi considered themselves to be free men, and no one, [444] not even naba, had the [85] right to reduce a Moaga subject to slavery. The facial tattoos made it easy to distinguish the Moaga ●[304] from foreigners.

Since there were few contacts between neighboring villages, 567 it was difficult even for highwaymen to sell young people from near- 674 by areas. This does not mean that there were not, all the same, captives of Mossi origin. Bandits rode, for instance, from Ouagadougou to Boussouma. They always carried large leather [492] sacks tied to their saddles and into them thrust children and women who were taken by surprise while gathering fruit in the bush. Such captives were always sold far from their home villages. Naturally such practices were severely dealt with by the naba. Naba Wobgo drove the canton chief of Bilgotenga, Warongo, from his territory because he enslaved Mossi people. Warongo was forced to take refuge in Yatenga and returned home only after the coming of the French.

567 Some of the slaves brought back from Garango were kept by the emperor, and the rest were distributed among the warriors. Up to that time no one thought of using them for anything but field work and domestic labor.

It was Naba Baongo, the twenty-sixth successor of Oubri, who first thought of selling the slaves. He said: "Id kossi bazas kamba tib boude nan wa saï" (literally, "let us sell these slave dogs; perhaps, one day, [86] there will be no more of them"). It is as if the emperor had foreseen the suppression of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves.

Today one seldom encounters former Boussanga slaves. They have no doubt returned to their villages since the arrival of the [304] French. Their descendants (house slaves, dogyiri) now wear the same facial tattoos as the Mossi.

567 them for kola nuts with the Achanti [Ashanti] or for loaves of salt
439 at Timbuktu. Although they were always transported by roundabout routes to prevent them from finding their way back to their homes, still some of them always managed to escape.

492 The naba used the young yemdado as soroné or grooms, and
567 they would often [93] take the young and attractive women (yempoksé) as wives.

641 The sale of free men. Neither the emperor of the Mossi nor
681 his vassals sold their subjects. Individuals who were regarded as dangerous were simply put to death unless they took refuge in a bangaré to avoid being executed, as has been noted above. Some were sent to the emperor to be made into eunuchs.

304 The facial tattoos worn by the Mossi clearly distinguished them
567 from neighboring peoples. However, if by accident or because of
689 need a naba sold a free man and the latter was claimed by his relatives, the chief was required to buy back the slave or to indemnify his family. We have described above how a canton chief was exiled by the emperor for having sold free Mossi.

583 Concealed selling of women and children. In the chapter on
562 marriage customs among the Mossi we shall show that a native
567 Moaga did not demand a bride price because he did not want to feel that he was selling his daughter. There is no doubt that this rule has exceptions. Indeed, we shall show that the failure to pay a debt, a bout of drunkenness, or a favor received might suffice to mortgage the future of a daughter, even though at the time she might be a small child and quite unaware of her fate. In any event, there would be no question of her expressing any opinion, since her wishes are never taken into account. During periods of famine -- which have been
[731] occurring almost [94] regularly for some years -- a small basket of millet is enough to make a father promise his daughter. In the same way, we regret to say, a great many girls are promised in exchange for trifling sums at the time the poll tax is paid.

567 Rights of slaves. Since he is regarded as an inferior being, the yemdaogo (slave) has no well-defined rights. He is required to perform all kinds of domestic work and must give unquestioning obedience to his master and the master's family. Besides his essential duties, however, he is permitted to do some farming for himself, practice some trade, or to raise cattle, with the proceeds constituting

644 554 576 [101] It is to be noted that a gourdful of this water with millet flour on which a bit of karite butter is floating is a customary courtesy offering among the Mossi. It is most improper to greet or to receive a stranger by offering him plain water.

644 782 On the fourth or fifth day the Djiba Naba proceeds to Zoanghna (a village located two or three kilometers behind the government buildings) and there hands over a sheep and a cow to serve as offerings to the sacred amulets of the ancestors and to protect him from evil spirits and wicked people. He does not spend the night in this village but returns home immediately after the sacrifice.

644 788 Several days later the decision is made to install the new naba in his domain. A large number of soroné, drummers, and followers accompany him on what amounts to a kind of obligatory pilgrimage which we shall describe briefly.

The following itinerary is customary.

First, the Djiba Naba goes to Badnogo where he spends the night. The next day he goes on to Samba where he is offered water with flour in it, and for his part, he gives salt to be shared among the old women of the village.

One may ask why salt is given to the old women and not to [888] the other people. The Mossi call old women nough' pouk ramba, that is, those who, when blessing you, clasp their hands so as to make a higher power hear and grant their prayers.

644 788 431 [102] On the following day he proceeds to Tensobitenga where he remains for three days. Beer is prepared for him; he is given a cow for his followers and a wife for himself. At Nakamtenga, his next stop, the village chief welcomes him with a sheep and many baskets and bowls of sagbo (millet mush).

644 788 He does not remain here for the night but instead goes on to Koubri. This is the village where eunuchs formerly suffered the cruel operation of castration (1). The canton chief meets him, leads

839 ●304 681 1. Eunuchs. Bandits, thieves, murderers, and slaves or soroné (servitors) convicted of adultery with women of the nobility were the only ones sent to Koubri, a canton in the circle of Ouagadougou, to be castrated. This operation involved only the removal

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of the testicles, until the day when a eunuch managed, no one knows how, to take advantage of some of the women he was supposed to be guarding. From then on it was deemed necessary to remove the penis completely, and a copper cartridge was inserted for purposes of urination.

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As soon as the person fainted after undergoing the operation, a drink was concocted whose ingredients are unknown. When he revived, he was so thirsty that he downed the drink in a single gulp. It is said that the drug stupefied the eunuch to such a degree that he would be incapable of taking vengeance even if he had any weapons at hand.

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It was only after he had completely recovered that the victim was sent to the Mogho Naba. The latter assigned him the duty of guarding a harem or a royal tomb.

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him to his house, seats him by his side, and announces to the populace that he has just been visited by his son (Koubri Naba is a descendant of the Mogho Naba).

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He then offers the crown prince a cow and a great deal of [103] beer, and then, before he leaves, the Djiba Naba has free access to the chief's household where he takes as a wife the first nubile girl he encounters. The stay at Koubri traditionally lasted for seven days, but it could be shortened to two or three in view of the great expense involved in entertaining a prince of such high rank, especially at the present time when the canton chiefs no longer enjoy their former prestige.

The Djiba Naba continues on his way to Kombissiri where he is the guest of the canton chief. For a week, in addition to his food which must, of course, be copious and abundant quantities of beer, the crown prince also receives a cow, a sheep, and, before his departure for Doulougou, a wife.

[i.e. canton chief — Analyst]

173 to be on the field of battle himself and for five years was unable
644 to vanquish his enemy who was entrenched on a mountain and
357 well supported by the local inhabitants.

After Warga had tried every means at his command to conquer his enemy, he hacked down the crops, which were almost ripe, and captured all the livestock that ventured down the mountain. In short, he devastated the country.

This succeeded so well that at last the local inhabitants, faced with famine, had to choose between the life of the chief they were sheltering and their own lives. Mamzi was therefore handed over and imprisoned at Saponé (1).

1. The principal canton town in the district of Ouagadougou.

During the five years of this difficult campaign, Naba Warga, aside from the warriors, had only a young boy to serve him since his wives were not present. The boy served as cook [160] and personal servant. In short, he performed the duties of a wife so well that Warga decided that he was worthy of some notice and decided to reward him.

When he had returned to his lands, he freed this faithful servitor after first giving him a wife. Then it occurred to him that several children in his court could perform the same services. He therefore ordered them to be recruited on a large scale, and these were the sogoné.

357 Every boy recruited to become a sogoné can expect to be given
644 a wife, however little she may be worth, when he is freed.

The sogoné have the same standing as the napagba[3] and they
[554 wear the same ornaments. A group of bracelets worn on the wrists,
304] in fact, distinguish the napagba and the sogoné from free women.

It is their duty to serve the naba. They form a half circle around the naba when he appears; they accompany him on his short outings; and they carry the scepter and all of the insignia of chiefdom. They serve drinks to the naba, fan him when he takes a nap
[293] with fans called fika, make his bed, and do various errands. Likewise a naba never sends anyone but a sogoné to take a message to his wives.

3[i.e. royal wives — Analyst]

775 553 that the same baby is returning. So, in order to induce him to remain on earth, they give him a significant name.

One of these is Yewayan (literally, "one who has returned"), meaning "Here he is, back again; it is he once more, and we recognize him."

The same name is used for all members of the same family.

● 304 Scars. When a child is a year or two old, the family calls in an old woman who draws more or less straight lines on his face (cheeks, chin, forehead, even the nose) with a razor. These marks vary according to region and are not [193] the same, for example, at Kaya as at Ouagadougou.

The design used most often, however, has three straight lines from forehead to chin and one or two horizontal lines running across the nose and joining the vertical lines on the cheeks.

853 782 Feeding. If a mother does not have enough milk, she goes very early in the morning to a tree, for example, the kamsaongo or wédega (of the family of gohine lianas), to ask for milk. She falls to her knees, and believing that she is addressing a living person, she makes her request humbly, but with what faith! It appears that the prayer is often granted, but the woman must never again go under the tree or she will lose her milk.

853 604 The question of choosing a nurse does not arise in Mossi country unless the mother dies. In that case, the little orphan is entrusted to a sister of the child's father. If she has been a mother, she too goes to the tree to ask for milk, as described above, even if her most recent delivery occurred years before. Finally, if the child thus nursed is a girl and survives, she becomes the property of her father's sister who will give her in marriage, later on, to the suitor of her choice.

III. Death

764 554 The importance of funeral ceremonies depends on the age and rank of the deceased.

Nitiema (aged persons). Upon the death of an [194] old man or woman, all the relatives who live in the village are assembled.

428 to change his mind. If, however, he absolutely refuses to heed their protests, they will not make an issue of it, but when the time comes to [262] apportion the estate, the testamentary arrangement to disinherit the heir presumptive will simply be declared null and void.

If the heir presumptive was disinherited for any of the causes for disqualification listed above or because he had committed adultery with one of his father's wives or a wife of someone in the family, the estate is given to the next in the line of succession as determined by Moaga custom.

Right to make a will. All who own property may make wills.

Revocation of wills. Wills may be revoked if the testator so desires. He has only to make a simple oral declaration of changed intention in the same manner as that described above.

Chapter 18

Circumcision. Do the Mossi Practice It?

● 304 184 Circumcision is highly esteemed among the Mossi. Some colonial officials, because of their ignorance of Mossi customs, have claimed that neither circumcision nor excision was practiced. One must be able, indeed, to distinguish between the Moaga, the Boussanga, and especially the Nionioga. Although the three groups are related, they have different customs.

304 Circumcision, which is done according to precise rules, is carried out here in virtually the same way as it is among the Kassonké of Kayes.

304 626 The ceremony must originally have been imposed on the Dagomba (of whom the Mossi are descendants) by Islam. Now, however, young men seek to have themselves circumcised, not for any religious reason, but rather to avoid the ridicule of their friends and, especially, the scorn shown by Mossi women for any uncircumcised man.

304 We shall attempt to describe below the circumcision ceremony among the Mossi.

After the harvest, toward the end of November, the young men state their wish to be circimcised. Since the cost of supporting

304 a boy [264] during the circumcision process is considerable for his family, the latter will not agree to it unless they have had a good harvest.

Besides, since the affair must be quite grandiose in character, thirty to fifty boys from the ages of twelve to fifteen must be ready before permission will be given for the operation. After the relatives have consulted the soothsayers (bagba), they seek out a Yarga (Dioula of Mandé origin) or a Silmimoaga (the Toucouleur [Tukolor] of Mossi country) and ask him to perform the operation.

This surgeon for the occasion is called gounni.

Kéogo. A site is selected where there are no habitations, preferably a sandy area. A circle is laid out and walled with Mossi secco (sogsak' pinri). The size of the enclosure, the keogo, is governed by the number of boys who are going to live in it.

The boys are brought to the gate of the kéogo, which is strictly guarded by zoumsi (men who have already been circumcised). Each boy assumes a serious and defiant manner to give himself courage. Inside the circle there is a milling crowd, and there is such a noise of drums and songs that the following ritual sentence is barely audible: "Moaga wanian konlebin kouli moaga (You came in a Moaga -- here meaning an uncircumcised man -- you will not be a Moaga when you go out)."

The operation. Before the boys are brought in, a hole has been [265] dug for each one. The child is blindfolded and made to sit on a stone in front of the hole. The prepuce, stretched out as far as possible and tied with a string, is placed on a block of wood and cut off with a single slash of a razor (barga). The penis is held up with a split reed to permit the blood to flow into the hole. I believe that there is a special hole into which all the severed prepuces are thrown. A string tied around the boy's hips replaces the reed after the operation to keep the penis away from the body and thus avoid painful rubbing.

304 551 Bankoensé yuiya (names given to circumcised boys). The names vary according to the rank of each boy. The first to be operated upon is called Falinga; the second, Ouanda; the third,

304 Wanzouri; and so on through Nodo, Koulwandé, Wemba, etc.
551 There is even the favorite who is called Ponsom because he is given special privileges.

304 Zouinsi yuiya (names of the guards of the kéogo and of those who watch over the bankoensé). Seven days after the ceremony some of the zouinsi are chosen to supervise the kéogo, to take care of its organization and to arrange the games. A real hierarchy is involved, beginning with the Soré Naba ("chief of the path"), who is, so to speak, the head of the establishment, and proceeding down in order of [266] precedence through Sobila Naba, Dag'noré, and Dag'Nobila (gatekeepers). The role of the latter is to allow any zounga [singular of zouinsi] to re-enter the enclosure while preventing any of the circumcised boys from leaving the enclosure without their permission. The Galli and Gallibila are in charge of the drums. The Imam and the Imambilla ("chiefs of pardon") protect the bankoensé from ill-treatment by the zouinsi. Then there is Banzambo, a comic character who is always performing all sorts of dances to relieve the monotony of life in the kéogo and give the boys a little fun. His gyrations always amuse the company. The duty of two characters called Wagdré, "chief thief," and Wagd'billa, "little thief," is to steal the meat acquired by the newly circumcised boys during forays or the saghbo brought by the boys' parents. They compensate for their mischief, however, by putting the younger children to bed and feeding them when the games go on too long. They do this in spite of the vigilance of the guards.

The Nané and Nanebilla, along with the Bankoé, are the masters of ceremonies.

Support of the circumcised boys. As we have already pointed out, the relatives of the boys are expected to provide them with morning and evening meals during their recovery. Actually, the boys get very meager rations since more than half of the food -- after the choicest bits have been set aside by the lembré (person in charge of tasting the food)-- is reserved [267] for the many zouinsi. Since most of them are bachelors, they welcome a chance to eat their fill.

304 Care given the sick boys. A specially arranged corner of the
752 kéogo serves as an infirmary. Treatment consists of washing the

304 752 [278] wound with warm water which often is not scrupulously clean since the gourd in which it is kept is not always washed. The wound is dusted with a charred substance (made by burning the bark or leaves of the baguem-baga plant) mixed with karite butter. It is bandaged with a leaf from the kantonga bush, tied on with a bit of thread. Once the wound has begun to heal, it is wrapped in cotton strips. The water used to wash the wound is thrown into a hole that is covered with a stone.

304 198 Special language of the kéogo. In order to prevent the Moaga (here meaning an uncircumcised person) from understanding what is said within the kéogo or between the boys and the guards, a special language has been developed. Some of its words are as follows:

Water (kom in ordinary Mossi language), hargo;
Millet cake (saghbo in Mossi), lâbo;
Sauce (zindo in Mossi), kirou;
Fire (bougoum in Mossi), nionom;
Beer (dam in Mossi), sonnom;
A robe or blanket (fougou in Mossi), pilli;
Mat (pinri in Mossi), wanghé. [268]

304 292 Distinctive attire of the circumcised boys (bankoanga). His costume, wallimba or zougba, consists of a fringed loincloth with pockets. He carries a rough stick (zâbré) with which he hunts rabbits and other small game.

304 293 He accompanies his evening dance with an instrument called wassimba, a curved stick on the end of which are strung four or five pieces of gourd, roughly circular in shape, with holes bored through them.

304 534 535 Tom-toms. The bankoensé (newly circumcised boys) dance to the beat of two drums like those used in the warba and waongo (see the chapter on native dances). The drums are called gangango when they accompany other dances, but here they are called gallyans.

304 Prohibitions in the kéogo. A Moaga (1) is strictly forbidden

1. "Moaga" is used here in a pejorative sense and means an uncircumcised man.

304 to look into the enclosure. If he should commit such an indiscretion which is considered a gross blunder, he at once suffers the consequences. He is immediately dragged into the circle undressed, and circumcised without any consultation with his relatives.

It is strictly forbidden to enter the kéogo, with néoda (shoes), a pougla [269] (red fez), and kandé (spears). If a canton chief should take it into his head to visit the circumcised boys -- an unlikely situation -- he would have to leave all his insignia of rank outside.

304 834 Since it has been observed that young men who have had sexual intercourse before their circumcision had difficulty in being healed after the operation, they are advised to avoid sexual intercourse for the first few months after the scars form.

304 262 They do not eat wagha sauce (a sauce made of the immature fruit of the wagka, a tree of the kapok family).

304 526 Required exercises for the bankoensé. The bankoensé are required to perform painful and tiring exercises, which considerably retards their recovery. We shall describe the principal ones below.

Very early in the morning when it is very cool -- we have pointed out that the ceremony takes place at the beginning of the cool season -- the boys are awakened and forced to lie prone on the cold sand without any covering. This is the bourga. Naturally enough, the limbs become a bit stiff, so they are roundly whipped with berrella (branches of certain trees), ostensibly to give them warmth and strength. Then, to the beat of the tom-toms, they must do the exercise called guella. This difficult feat involves jumping like a frog from a crouching position [270] and at intervals making a circular movement with the legs. They may also be required to do the even more difficult nagda, an exercise which involves walking on the hands with the legs in the air. Another exercise requires the boys, starting from an erect position, to bend backwards until the hands touch the ground. This is called kaougsèga, "back breaker." The unfortunates whose hands fail to reach the ground get a bump on the head. There are also movements of the head called zouanka, like those made by Kassonké girls and the Wiskamba of Mossi country.

304 Release. The stay in the kéogo lasts from 90 to 100 days. Around the eightieth day, when all the boys have recovered, their heads are shaved and they are told that they will be released a week later. Chickens (koug'nossé, "chickens of the stone") are killed, and each boy is given half a chicken.

Actually, the ceremony of liberation will not take place until fourteen days after this ceremony. All of the boys' belongings (loincloth, bandages, sticks, etc.) are burned by the zouinsi in a great fire near the kéogo. The bankoensé, completely naked, must jump over the fire and run straight to the house of the Bankoé without looking back. A new enclosure has been built there, and the boys are given skirts, robes, trousers, and caps of various colors which their relatives bought or [271] had made for them. Everyone on this occasion wants his son to be distinguished by the richness of his costume. The procession of the circumcised boys is a motley and picturesque sight. One or two days after this, the boys must go back toward the kéogo at nightfall for the last time. They stop before reaching it, however, and return to the house of the Bankoé with their backs slightly bent; this is called lé ssé-bourgou.

The boys enjoy a veritable festival for a week. They are in high spirits from the admiration they receive, from being able to perform dances other than those peculiar to the circumcision ceremony, from drinking beer, and especially from eating their fill, since their parents have sacrificed chickens and sheep for the occasion.

Finally, very early one morning, some zouinsi collect the boys' handsomely decorated sticks (wangha or dibissi) and go off to bury them in holes dug outside the village. This is the end of the cremony, and now the boys may return to their homes.

304 572 All of the boys have undergone the same rough treatment and have led the same life for about 100 days. During this time of trial, friendships and lasting attachments have been formed. They will henceforth call each other by their "circumcision names" and will help each other since they are now friends.

304 In order to forestall possible reprisals -- since in the kéogo no distinction is made between the son of a naba and a peasant's son -- custom forbids the [272] new initiates to hold a grudge against the zouinsi for the ill-treatment to which they were subjected.

314 184 The Nioniossé and the Soukoaba do not practice circumcision, and that is why they are called Mossé. In villages inhabited solely by Nioniossé, a kéogo may not be set up. At present some boys of Nionioga origin ignore the prohibition and go to their mother's village (Yastenga) to have the purifying operation (1).

[775] 1. Apparently the Moslems believe that those who are circumcised will not go to hell.

304 832 626 Among the Mossi many Christians voluntarily have themselves circumcised; women -- even Christians -- feel a certain repugnance for the touch of the "Moaga."

Finally, excision is also esteemed among the Mossi, except among the Nioniossé who do not practice it. Girls who are not excised are scorned by their friends and will have no lovers.

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2:Mangin--49a M-5 (ca. 1910) 1921 FA28 Mossi FA28

Tattooed Mossi Youth.

Tattooed Mossi Women.

852 Three days after the birth of a male child, or four days in the case
553 of a daughter, the father and mother invite the relatives to come and rejoice over the new addition to the family. On that day the baby's forehead is shaved in a circle, and he is given a name. The husband's sisters or his other wives choose a name for the first child, and the father himself chooses the names of the others.

551 The name is derived from an event which preceded, attended, or followed the birth. If the mother ever happened to kill a chicken, even by mistake, even in her childhood, her first child is called by the generic name for chickens (noara), or else he will die. If the father or mother have seen two snakes in the same spot, the child will bear the name Ganda. If several previous children died, the newborn takes the name Yéwaya, "he has come." If several reasons for specific names concur, for instance, if he should be named Noara, Ganda, Yéwaya, he is called Ywawa, "one with many names." A child often bears the name of an older sibling with the addition of the adjective Bila, "little, younger." Thus, if the older child is called Tibo, the younger one is called Tibila (Tibo Bila, "the little Tibo fetish"). In other words, names are not given haphazardly. Some names are rather pretty: Zuényendé, "he is shy"; Nongabamba, "she loves them (her parents)"; Danimmamyé, "forget me not." Sometimes the name merely indicates the child's sex: Daore, "male"; Poko, "female"; or else the festive occasion or day of the week when the child was born.

304 Just as names are not given haphazardly, tattoos do not vary without reason. The native tattooing consists basically of three parallel lines on each side of the face, running vertically across the cheek from the temples to the chin, with a fourth line leading from the nose perpendicularly to the other three and crossing the cheek horizontal hatching between them, like a ladder; this is the mark of free men and of chiefs' sons. The three vertical lines may also be interrupted halfway down the cheek by three horizontal stripes, and then continue down to the chin; this is the mark of a child who was born [84] among the Peul because his older siblings had died and the sorcerer had decreed that his mother should give birth among the Peul. This [197] tattooing is characteristic of a distinct Mossi tribe, which lives among them but speaks a different language—the Marensé, better known as Marka. If a child has a Yarga /Yarse/ mother or grandmother, he will bear one horizontal stripe on the right cheek in addition to the three vertical lines /on each cheek/; this is the Yarsé tattooing.

304 Children are tattooed at any age, sometimes when already grown. Many Yarsé do not tattoo their children, and the Mossi themselves do not seem especially to hold to this barbarous custom which sometimes disfigures an individual. The tattooing is done with a razor, and powdered charcoal is put into the wounds. In order to soften the skin and to alleviate the pain, the whole face is covered with oil until the wounds are healed, leaving more or less accentuated scars depending on the success of the operation. Some natives are completely disfigured by thick excrescences of flesh as the result of a faulty operation.

Sorcerers sometimes have the strange idea of prescribing tattoo marks on the belly or lower back of children whose older siblings have [789] died. For instance, a woman had lost three of her children. She consulted a sorcerer when the fourth was born, and he declared with the greatest seriousness that the child would die if his buttocks were not marked with stripes and his belly with tattooings radiating from the navel. The child was marked accordingly, and he lived! Young girls nearly always tattoo their belly with lines extending radially from the navel; many adorn their chest above the bosom with small stripes running perpendicular to the breasts and parallel between them. The tattooing patterns we have described here are, of course, only the most widespread types, because there is a great variety of markings.

304 852 Just as there is no set age for tattooing, there is none for circumcision. Children of seven or eight are circumcised along with youths and even mature men. Circumcision does not seem to be a Mossi [184] custom, for it is not a general practice. In Ouagadougou province most children are circumcised, while in Koupéla province most of them are not. However, the custom is gaining yearly in Koupéla. The head of the family often has himself circumcised because he is ill, and his children follow suit. Thus circumcision is introduced into the family, for once the father has undergone the operation, his children do likewise. Sometimes the mother is a Yarga, thus from a 304 563 Moslem family, and her children are circumcised, a new gain for the practice. It also happens that children are drawn to it through sheer 852 curiosity and the enticing assurances of the Peul and Yarsé, who are usually Moslems and thus circumcised, and who spread propaganda all around them. Excision, on the other hand, is universal.

/42/ When there is a group to be circumcised, their relatives set a date with the Peul who is to perform the operation. At dawn of that

304 563 852 day the one in charge of the circumcision, a wealthy Yarga or Mossi who has the means to feed several of the people to be circumcised, chooses a tree to serve as shelter for the operation. Rain need not be taken into account, for circumcision is always performed during the dry season from December to April, when agricultural work is at a standstill. [778] The tree is surrounded with straw mats, forming the téoo or sacred enclosure which no one who is not circumcised may come near without running the risk of being insulted and often beaten; if he should dare to step inside it, he would be stricken by the greatest misfortunes. The Peul sets out a flat stone, sacrifices a chicken in order to make the spirit of the tree benevolent toward those to be circumcised, and operates on the boys one by one. Drums are played throughout the operation to drown the cries of the victims.

852 For three days afterwards the newly circumcised boys do nothing. They rest and tend their wounds. They remain isolated from the rest [535] of the community for two or three months, sometimes even longer. Judging by the dances which close the festivities, dancing must be their primary concern during that period of time. They also thresh the millet of those who invite them to do so, but no uncircumcised person may join them, no uninitiated individual may come near them. [198] They do not speak the Mossi language at this time, but a special tongue of which they learn enough to serve them in their everyday needs. Woe to those who forget and use their native tongue; they are [551] beaten with switches made of a kind of willow. Even their names are changed, and no one may call them by their Mossi names.

The circumcised boys are divided in two groups, one "male" and one "female." One of the groups bears the name of the hyena (kwara in their language) and the other is called masalro, whose French equivalent we do not know. The hyena group must strain their wits to snatch food, even from the other circumcised boys, who are kept constantly on the alert. The other group makes improper gestures during the dance.

852 293 776 481 The circumcised boys are covered with gray dust to alter their appearance completely. A tail is fastened to the back of their breechcloth, hanging to the ground. It is made of plaited cotton thread and ends in a pompon. Its function is to drive off the kikirsi spirits, who apparently do not like circumcised persons. The boys walk bent over and leaning on sticks like old men. This is done to test their obedience and to see if they listen carefully to what they are told.

775 ground; he also pours what is left at the bottom of the gourd, so the
769 souls will rejoice with him. It is considered a great honor when a
[554] naba tells an elder to grasp one side of the gourd and to pour along with him.

775 One must not laugh about the souls of the deceased and their visits
761 to earth. If you doubt their return, listen to what an old naba once told me. "One day, I had gone to visit a naba, my friend and neighbor. We had arranged to meet at his house with another neighboring chief. He gave us a very nice welcome, and the day was most pleasant. We were resting at night in the shelter of his soukala when we were suddenly awakened by the sound of harness bells and horses galloping. On the following day we left our host. No sooner had we left than he took ill. A week later he died. The souls had come to fetch him. Oh! Father, do not laugh about the souls of the deceased!" And the good old man trembled with emotion. This is what our Mossi believe. They firmly believe in all these ghost stories.

775 Are the souls reincarnated? Small children who die before the age of reason are said to return in the person of the first child borne by their mother. This is why, especially if the mother has lost several
● [304] children in a row, the baby is marked at birth with distinctive signs, particularly tattooings on the belly and lower back; sometimes, if he
[764] dies, a piece of his ear is cut off, or a toe or finger joint broken. It is said that the child born next will bear the same marks, but no living example of this could be cited. Often, the mother leaves the hut where her baby died. An old woman spreads ashes before the door in the evening, and if small footprints are found in the morning, it is a sign that the child came back and wishes to return to his mother's bosom.

Rebirth is not granted to anyone other than young children, not even to young unmarried people. They remain in the place of the souls for years on end, the number of which cannot be ascertained, and no distinction is made between the rich and the poor, the powerful and their subjects.

775 The soul of suicides, cursed in death, is not entitled as a rule to
762 funeral ceremonies. It wanders through the world without harming anyone, but unable to find rest.

577 Morality is reduced to its simplest expression. Whatever harms
673 other people is bad. Think your own intimate thoughts and desire anything you like; as long as you do no harm to your fellow man, no fault has been committed. Fornication and adultery are faults only

viewpoint of ethnographic research, text similarities do not mean very much, and idioms that are not fixed by writing may, within a few centuries, become deformed to the extent of being unrecognizable. While the value of grammatical comparisons is much more important, we have unfortunately had neither the time nor the means to make use of this method. We will, therefore, merely indicate this point of view which, in our opinion, could lead to fruitful observations. On the other hand, missionaries have claimed that the Mossi traditionally would have preserved the symbolic notion of the Christian cross, a fact we have been unable to verify and which, without being impossible a priori, seems unlikely."

After this parenthesis about the distant origins of the Mossi, Captain Lambert continues:

"It is indeed highly probable, and here again, lacking written documents, we have only oral traditions to base our opinions on, that the Mossi people, split up by the impact of a Moslem invasion from the east, must have, through successive waves and losing ground in the opposite direction, spread further toward the west, so that the Mossi-bé (1), who still form several agglomerations in the western

1. Mossi-bé is simply the plural of the word Mossi in Peuhle /Peul/ language.

part of Sokoto and even in the Dounzou circle and who also show striking analogies with the Mossi proper, can also be used as a reference. (Captain Lambert adds in a note: "Among the Mossi-bé we find the circumflex accent which would complete the ethnic tatooing of the Mossi as it is today. This mark rightly belongs to the natives of the left bank of the Niger river up to the angle formed by the Dollol-Maouri.") These agglomerations indicate, in a very approximate fashion, the location of the Mossi empire at the historical period that evidently marks its apogee of power; toward 1350, as we saw /4/ in the Tarikh, Timbuktu was conquered by the sultan of Mossi."

The incident to which Captain Lambert refers here is the conquest of Timbuktu by the Mossi (in 1333 exactly, according to the most advanced calculations) (1), which is mentioned by Es-Sadi in

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484 The journey takes six months from the time he leaves Ouagadougou to the time he returns. On his way to the Gold Coast he needs no bearers. He merely takes a Peuhl to herd the cattle, and provides him with food and 300 cowries a day, plus 1 franc on arrival per head of cattle herded.

Our trader stays with another Haoussa from Ouagadougou, another trader of course, who is wealthier than he. He does not pay rent, but offers him gifts from time to time in return for his hospitality.

His family lives at Iko in Haoussa territory, and consists of three wives and three children. He goes and sees them every two years.

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439 We can see that the Haoussa do their trading in grander and more forceful fashion than the Yarsé. They do not hesitate to expatriate themselves in order to carry out their trade, and in this fashion they have actually colonized southern Nigeria, Dahomey, Togoland, the Gold Coast, Mossi country, etc. Once settled there, they carry their trading operations farther than local merchants, and they hardly do anything else. While the Yarsé is an example of cultivator-trader, the Haoussa of Mossi territory is in most cases an example of pure trader who specializes completely in trading. This is why he towers above the whole trading structure of the country. Bent on gain, a speculator in cowries and French currency, more intelligent than the Mossi and Yarsé, he amasses large fortunes.

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439 In order to be quite thorough on the subject of present and past trading in Mossi territory, it should be added that formerly the slave trade was carried out alongside that in livestock, cotton fabric, kola nut, and salt. The slaves came chiefly from Gourounsi, /541/, Boussansé, and Kipirsi lands. The Djermabé /Zerma?/, especially, sold slaves to the Mossi in very large numbers when they pillaged Gourounsi territory. This trade, like the others, was in the hands of the Yarsé and Haoussa.

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304 Let us also add a word about the now-abolished eunuch trade. Formerly, the Mossi furnished some to the Haoussa, who forwarded them to Turkey via Egypt. The operated men were Gourounsi sold to the Mossi by the Zaberma and by their chief Baba-Tô. Some Mossi villages specialized in this kind of work. The village of Koubry,

839 especially, subsisted upon it. The victims, children from twelve
439 to fifteen years old, were provided by the Moro Naba, who kept
304 them afterward or sold them to the Haoussa.

In 1900 our ambassador to Turkey learned that a shipment of eunuchs which had reached Constantinople had originated in Mossi territory, which we had occupied since 1896. He warned the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who notified his colleague the Minister of the Colonies. Strict orders were issued to put an end to this Mossi industry, which has since ceased to exist.

439 Let us finally add the grain trade, which is unusual in Mossi territory. In the years 1906, 1907, and 1908 which saw poor harvests, however, the Mossi were forced to acquire grain in Yatenga (Ouahigouya circle) and in Gourounsi territory by selling livestock.

We have now concluded our discussion of Mossi occupations. Let us proceed to a study of the family and the superposed social organisms.

Chapter II

The Mossi: The Family, Public Powers, and Religion

593 We must state first that the Mossi family is a partly decommunalized family. This may come as a surprise in view of the foregoing section on work (cultivation predominates, stockbreeding is poor, industries flourish, trade is nonexistent), which had led us to expect something altogether different. Nevertheless, this is a fact.

The family is even highly decommunalized, although not everywhere to the same degree. In this respect, five different family types are to be found.

596 The first two are quite rare. They would seem to be witnesses
326 to an ancient state of affairs which has now vanished. Thus, one finds the common patriarchal type among those blacksmiths who are gathered into /special/ quarters or even villages and whom we mentioned in the section on industries. This type is found only among them and not among isolated blacksmiths, where only the common Mossi family type occurs.

793 643 839 778 the sacrifice and killed the donkey. He also slit the throat of a horse, a beef, and a sheep. (This eunuch in charge of guarding the tomb was called by the name of Naba Koutou, and in a way perpetuated the deceased Moro Naba. He was granted special privileges. If a man who was condemned to death ran away and reached the tomb, he was safe but became the eunuch's slave. Similarly, [567] a captive who ran away from his master gained his freedom from the latter if he reached the grave, but became the slave of Naba Koutou. Finally, at that time, it was forbidden to ride by the hut on a donkey. Naba Koutou would seize the donkey, or at least demand a ransom in cowries before returning it. This applied to any animals who ran astray near the tomb. The tomb still exists nowadays, along with the Naba Koutou who watches over it, but the latter no longer enjoys the same privileges.)

793 645 We saw earlier that the Moro Naba had a sort of minister of the cult in the person of the Gandé Naba, high priest and sacrificer. There was also the Pouy Naba, or chief of the fetisheers, whose function was probably to mediate between the Mossi bara and timisoba as a whole and the central authorities.

782 Let us close this study of Mossi religion, which incidentally is quite incomplete and a mere outline, with a few words on the human sacrifices that were performed /597/ in the territory prior to our occupation, and a few words on circumcision as well.

782 766 "Human sacrifices," says Marc., p. 156, "definitely took place among the Mossi up to the time when we occupied the territory. Whenever a Moro Naba died at Ouagadougou, one of his wives and one of his horses were sent to Gambaga in order to be sacrificed on the tomb of Ouidiraogo (?) who is regarded as the mother of the first Moro Naba. Soon after the occupation of Ouagadougou by the French, 782 754 the dethroned Moro Naba, Boukary Koutou, ordered the sacrifice of a black rooster, a black goat, a black donkey, a black beef, and a black slave on one of the mountains overlooking the White Volta. This, it seems, was bound to cause the immediate death of the new Moro Naba enthroned by Voulet."

304 As for circumcision, the Mossi circumcise boys and excise girls.

Boys are circumcised when they are from eight to twelve years old, and thirty or forty of them are circumcised at one time. The

304 occasion calls for festivities that last for one month, and it is repeated every seven or eight years in each village.

As for girls, they undergo the barbarous operation of excision when they are from eight to twelve years old. The girls' excision is not performed at the same time as the boys' circumcision, but in another year. The attendant festivities also last for one month.

The girls are operated on by a woman, the boys by a man.

It is not the labia of the girls that are severed, but the clitoris itself. Why do this? My informants did not know. Is it to make the weaker sex less susceptible to sensual pleasures? No. It would rather be, my informants tell me, to facilitate the physical union of men and women. This would also be the aim of the boys' circumcision. But my informants were not sure.

88 304 171 We might note that among the Mossi, as in certain other parts of West Africa, for example in Guinea (but not among the Gourounsi, where boys are not circumcised /598/ and girls are often excised at birth), circumcision and excision are combined with an initiation, that is to say, are closely connected with the education and instruction of young men and girls. One takes advantage of the circumcision or excision to complete, so to speak, the instruction and education of youth.

881 304 Marc has the following to say about the subject (op. cit., p. 150). "The circumcision of boys takes place around the age of twelve and occasions important festivities. There seems to be a sort of initiation ceremony, which is performed in rather mysterious circumstances. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find out exactly what does take place."

000 We close our survey of Mossi religion by referring the reader to Appendix 33 /not translated/ for a few complementary details on the Moslem question in the territory. We have also concluded our description of Mossi society as a whole. In order to gain a deeper understanding of its origins as far as the conquering population is concerned, we shall now have a glance at the Foutanké social type in the following chapter /not translated/.

152 their family, they love it very much, but they love their husband just as much if they love him at all. If they do not love their husband, naturally they love their family infinitely more.

304 833 When we study the children's life, we shall see that Mossi girls are excised at the age of nine or ten. This barbarous operation naturally removes an important part of a woman's sensual sensitiveness. The Negress is thus a generatrix rather than a lover. One cannot say of her as of the Latin poet's mistress: crispum ... docta movere latus /gracefully moving her slender body/. She is passive in love and content to give herself without resistance to the man's passion.

831 577 The morality of Mossi women is certainly laxer than that of European women. (Naturally, I compare the Mossi woman to the respectable woman of our occidental societies.) We saw earlier that the breach of virginity prior to marriage was not unusual and was tolerated with considerable leniency by custom. Adultery is also frequent and is punished in crude and rustic fashion. The woman is beaten and then forgiven. In short, morals are certainly less rigid [549] than in our own countries. On the other hand, prostitution does not exist, and this is a great moral advantage. Briefly, the division of labor in the sexual domain, as in other domains, is far less developed among the Mossi of Yatenga than among the highly evolved civilizations of our European and occidental countries. The same applies to the other Sudanese populations.

000 Now we turn to Children and Education. We shall discuss these matters in the following order. /250/

1. Filiation.
2. Theory of birth.
3. How children are welcomed.
4. Abortion.
5. Childbirth.
6. Baptism.
7. Freaks. Twins.
8. Nursing.
9. Charms for children and tattooings.
10. Children's games.
11. Familial education.
12. Education of children among themselves. Societies.
13. Young people's tasks.
14. Rights and duties of parents toward their children.
15. Duties of children toward their parents.

845 The birth of twins is a good omen when they are of different sex.
787 If they are of the same sex, however, it is a sign of approaching death for the father if they are girls, or for the mother if they are of the male sex. To conjure away this fate, a chicken is sacrificed.

853 Nursing. —When a woman is unable to nurse her child, another woman of the family is called in as a wet nurse, or, more simply, a goat is made to suckle the child. Both cases, however, are quite unusual.

854 Charms for children and tattooing. To protect the child from ill-
751 ness or accidents, a necklace with a charm containing the ashes of various shrubs is placed around its neck about two months after birth.

●304 The child is tattooed two and a half or three years after birth. Old women are in charge of this operation. They trace out the lines for the scars on the child's face with a sharp little knife which is bent at the tip. Then they put a mixture of karite butter and powdered charcoal on the wounds to stop the flow of blood.

Tattooing is the same for all the Mossi of Yatenga without distinction of rank. It consists of three vertical scars on each cheek, an oblique one on either side of the face from the corner between the eye and nose to the base of the cheek, and two or three little ones in the middle of the forehead. /255/

854 The very young child. —As in all of the /French/ Sudan, the mother carries the child on her back, wrapped in a cloth that is knotted in front over or under the breasts. She goes thus everywhere, works, pounds millet, etc., with the child on her back.

853 When she wants to suckle it, she brings it to her side, astraddle one hip, and supports it with one arm. She does not put it on the ground unless she is in her hut or teaching it how to walk.

When the child is two or three, it stops nursing and is put on the ground.

857 Until they are four or five, the children run about the compound and around it. At that age, they begin to go out into the bush all by themselves and to play with the other little boys.

Children's games. —We shall deal with this subject under "Mode of Subsistence (hygiene, games, play)."

857 Familial education. —The boys, as soon as they reach the age of
868 five or six, go with their big brother and tend the goats in the bush. They also go and fetch firewood, straw, etc. When they are nine or ten, they begin to handle the daba /a field implement/. At eleven or twelve they are already doing men's work.

593 The Moro Naba, after he has been notified by the family council,
684 pronounces the forfeiture of paternal authority. In case of incest, the guilty party was driven out of the territory.

593 Duties of children toward their parents. —The children owe obedience to their father and mother. They also owe them respect.

Their labor obligations are distributed among the fields of the work group, the father's private fields, the mother's small private plots, and their own little plots. Naturally they work most on the large fields belonging to the work group.

304 Circumcision. —Circumcision is performed at the age of 13 or 14.
881 It takes place in the month of December, hence during the dry, cool season. At this time the children are not needed to help in the fields, as they are in the winter season. This is also the case in the hot, dry season, but at that time the wounds would heal less quickly. This leaves the dry, cold season, which is excellently suited to the treatment of the circumcised, a time when the children have nothing whatever to do and the grown-ups very little.

304 Circumcision is performed on a certain number of children at the
621 same time. When a small village is involved, all the children in the
593 village are circumcised at once. When a large village is involved,
881 the children in each quarter are circumcised together. The children themselves ask their big brother if they may be circumcised when they feel that they have reached a suitable age for this operation. The big brother decides and says yes or no.

304 The children also set the exact date for the circumcision and go to
326 the man who has charge of the operation to make the arrangements.
881 In Yatenga, as a rule, he is a blacksmith (at Ouahigouya, for example, from the quarter of the Baloum-Naba). Sometimes, however, non-blacksmiths, either Foulsé or Mossi, perform the operation. When a performer of operations dies, he is replaced by someone who knows how to circumcise, either a brother or a son of the deceased or someone from another family.

304 Circumcision is not performed in the evening or at night, as happens
881 among other Blacks of West Africa, but at six o'clock in the morning. A particularly kind man among the people of the quarter or of the village has been chosen by the children who are to be circumcised. He wakes them up on that morning and takes them to the man who is to perform the operation. Big brothers accompany their younger brothers, but the father and mother do not witness the operation and are not even

304 881 notified, nor are the family heads. The women, girls, and other boys (those who are not to be circumcised) cannot witness the operation, and this is actually forbidden to them. Circumcision is performed in the bush, 500 meters from the village, in the open air by the side of a tree. There is no location determined by custom, however, and a spot is chosen each year at will.

The man who is performing the operation ties the tip of the patient's prepuce with a string /259/, and the boy squats down. A small block of wood is placed under the penis, and the tip of the penis rests upon it. The man places a small iron cleaver on the spot marked by the string, and deals it a sharp, neat blow with a stone, so the blade will make a clean cut. Naturally, a copious hemorrhage ensues. It is [752] first allowed to take its course for a while, and then the man stanches it by putting dust upon the wound. Each child is circumcised in turn. When the operations are over, the man who was chosen, the nané, leads the circumcised boys to another spot, 500 meters from the village, under a tree. He has the heads of the children's families notified (and they notify in turn the children's parents) that the boys have just been circumcised and beg forgiveness for having done this without telling them. Family heads, fathers, and mothers naturally forgive in accordance with custom. Meanwhile, the boys are taking care of themselves. By tying a string around the body, they lift the penis so its tip will not rub against the thighs. The string holds another cord which lifts the penis in a horizontal position. To maintain it in this position, they also place under the penis a little piece of forked wood, the tip of which rests on the testicles. They do not dress the wounds as yet. This will not be done until three days have passed.

304 342 881 Meanwhile, the men of the circumcised boys' compounds build two sheds in Mossi style (low, on forks, with a thick straw roof), one outside the village where the young men are, the other inside the village in front of the compound of the nané. Food for the circumcised boys is provided by their families. Each mother makes sarabou for her son, but the mothers do not bring it themselves, for, being women, they are not permitted to see the newly-circumcised boys. They send the sarabou through some boy who has already been circumcised. In the evening when it is quite dark, around seven o'clock, the nané brings the children to sleep under the shed erected in the village. Before daybreak in the morning they will, like shadows, leave again for the bush.

304 824 752 881 At the end of three days, the nané sends a few circumcised boys of preceding years, rasamba, to look in the bush for bark of the néré, karite, n'pékou, and the n'kouna trees. He has them boiled in a large canari and then allows the water to cool until it is lukewarm. Then he calls the bankonsé (this is the name of the newly circumcised boys in Mossi, bankonka in the singular, bankonsé in the plural) and orders them to wash their penes in this water. At the same time he has the leaves of the kantoboga boiled. This is an aloe-type plant of which we have already spoken /not translated/. When this washing is done, the bankonsé smear their penes with cow butter (karite butter is avoided because it is believed to soften the penis and to make it less virile), and then, after cutting kantoboga leaves into pieces, they wrap them around the member, forming a sort of sheath. These leaves are wrapped with cotton thread so they will stay in place. /260/

From then on, the same procedure is repeated every morning and every evening. The bankonsé undo the bandage, wash with néré or karite water, apply fresh butter and new kantoboga leaves. This is done until the wounds are healed.

Néré water, once prepared, keeps for seven days. The supply of kantoboga leaves is renewed only when there are no more on hand.

304 883 881 The bankonsé do not stir for the first three days. From the third to the tenth day, they begin to take a little exercise. For example, they fetch whatever water they need. At the end of ten days, they walk about in the bush, fetch firewood which they stack in piles, and do the same with straw. In the open country they chase hares, rats, and snakes with sticks, in short, all the small game which is to be found there. When there is water in the vicinity, they fish for frogs and fish. They also pick berries from bushes, etc.

[292] Their clothing consists of a kind of skirt which goes down to their ankles and which is made of old garments torn to shreds, of frayed cotton bands.

In the evening from time to time the bankonsé have tom-tom sessions near the shed where they sleep in the village. The griot /drummers, minstrels/ come and play on their instruments. Since this is done at night, men, women, and children may attend.

304 425 881 The bankonsé are entitled to ransack the bush and to take everything they find: chickens, goats, sheep, cotton, etc. The owners have no right to object, but this applies only to small livestock. The bankonsé have no right to larger animals and horses.

881 It seems that among the Mossi and Foulsé, the nané does not give
●304 moral lessons to the bankonsé, contrary to the procedure among the Bambara where the custom has been preserved.

At the end of a month, the bankonsé are healed. The families are notified, and each household prepares a new pair of breeches and a boubou /robe/ for the young circumcised boys.

On the evening preceding the day when they make their reappearance in the village, around seven o'clock, the skirts of the circumcised boys are heaped into a pile and burned. The following morning the nané leads the bankonsé to the well to wash from head to toe before donning their new clothes. Before leaving camp, the firewood gathered by the boys is distributed among their mothers and the straw among their family heads. The nané also keeps a certain amount for himself. This is his allowance, aside from his being provided with food throughout the month, along with the circumcised boys, by the latter's
[833] relatives. (On the other hand, he had to remain separated from his wife, for there is a superstition that should he approach her, the bankonsé would fail to heal.) When the distribution of straw and firewood has been completed, our circumcised boys make their triumphal entry into the village at seven o'clock in the morning in their /261/ beautiful new garments. To the sound of the tom-tom, they visit
[431] all the compounds, calling on everyone. Gifts are offered to them (kola nuts, cowries, peanuts, cotton, dolo, etc.). When the visits are completed, the celebration is over, and the bankonsé return home.
[551] They may henceforth be called by name again; this could not be done during their retreat.

Excision. ——Girls are excised when they are eight, nine, or ten, depending on how mature they are. As with the boys, this is done during the month of December, but instead of being carried out on a village or quarter basis, it is done on a compound basis. The operation itself is performed by an old woman who knows how to do it. It is not she, however, who watches over the girls afterwards, but an old woman of the compound who has them under her supervision for twenty-five or thirty days. During that time, the girls are kept apart, sleeping in their guardian's hut and taking care of themselves. As soon as they can walk, they go and gather wood in the bush for her, they fetch water, spin cotton, etc. At nightfall, they sing in chorus, clapping their hands in rhythm.

When they are healed, they deck themselves with all the bracelets and jewelry they can find in the compound. Thus dressed up and

881 adorned, they go in a group to greet the mother of each one in turn,
304 but they do not go out into the village like the boys.

In short, among the Mossi and Foulsé of Yatenga, circumcision and excision are not characterized by the intervention of any powerful religious society like the komo among the Bambara and among the Mandé in general. Nor do we find here those picturesque details which are so strikingly present among the Malinké of Upper Guinea and even more so among the tribes of Lower Guinea (Soussou /Susu/, Landouman /Landuma/, etc.) (3). Nevertheless, circumcision is

3. On this topic, see André Arcin, La Guinée française /French Guinea/, pp. 438-446, and Noirot, A travers le Foutah-Djallon et le Bambouk /Across the Fouta Djallon and Bambouk/, concerning the Landouman.

important in the lives of the Mossi and Foulsé of Yatenga, because it transforms the child into a young man.

591 After circumcision. —Following circumcision or excision, only marriage remains. When a girl married, as we have seen above, she leaves her compound and goes to her husband's residence. The young man, however, remains in his own compound. He is given a cabin, a hut, for himself and his bride if there is one available and empty, or a new one is built for him. When he has a child, he builds a hut near his own for the young mother and son, unless he is given another one which is available.

884 Emancipation and coming of age. —One can scarcely speak of emancipation and coming of age among the Mossi. A man comes of age when he marries, but he always remains a minor to some extent vis-à-vis his work group, his compound, and his family. Emancipation /262/ and coming of age are French concepts which have no equivalent among the Mossi in particular and the Sudanese in general. One might acknowledge, however, as does Vadier in his monograph on Yatenga, a sort of coming of age around the age of 17 or 18 for purposes of buying and selling.

429 Guardianship. —When a Mossi dies, his wives and children revert to his oldest brother. If there are many wives and children, they are apportioned among the brothers of the deceased. The head of the family presides over the distribution.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

The torture was seen as a punishment, and not as a form of ordeal to ascertain guilt or innocence. It was designed to cause the culprit as much suffering as possible before he died, and its harshness reflects the Mossi fear of witches and witchcraft. In one form of punishment called *koudgilga*, the culprit was sent to the smith, who tortured him by placing hot iron balls in both his hands. He was then beaten to death. Another type of punishment called *swengalenga* was more painful. A pottery jar from which the bottom had been removed was heated in a fire. Then it was placed over the head of the convicted witch and allowed to burn its way down onto his shoulders. The culprit was subsequently killed. Sometimes a convicted witch was not killed; instead, a man was sent to Ouagadougou to be castrated and sold as a eunuch, and a woman was sold outside the country as a slave.

Gross disrespect toward the chief and crimes of lese majesty were uncommon among the Mossi. These crimes were usually committed by persons who came into close contact with the chief—nobles and court retainers—rather than by commoners, serfs, or slaves. The most common form of lese majesty was adultery with one of the district chief's wives. The penalty for this was death for both violators. Anyone who dared insult the district chief at court was seized and executed. The same fate awaited those who talked about him maliciously in public or threatened to stir a rebellion against him. If the culprits were commoners, they were executed; if they were nobles, they were strangled in secret or were forced to commit suicide.

The district chief was caught in a dilemma whenever nobles committed major crimes or unlawful acts. They could not be imprisoned, and only the Mogho Naba had the legal prerogative to execute them. When a noble committed a major crime such as treason or rebellion, he was sent to the capital to be executed by slaves, who strangled him with a piece of cotton cloth. However, no district chief could allow the nobles to commit crimes with impunity, secure in the knowledge that they could only be punished at Ouagadougou. If a nobleman subverted the chief's rule by repeated acts of cruelty and brigandage, he was executed, although illegally. The executioners were the Baglere Naba and the Dapore Naba. These two men secretly visited the condemned noble, taking with them a bundle as a present from the chief. This bundle contained a new white robe in which were secreted a chief's bonnet and a poisoned arrow. As soon as the noble saw the gift, he knew that he was being ordered to kill himself. If he attempted to raise an alarm or run away, he was instantly strangled and his body was discarded in the bush. If he accepted the sentence, he was allowed to have food prepared, to eat, and then to kill himself. The chief ordered an elaborate funeral for his kinsman as though he had died an ordinary death. Thus, he was able to observe all the proprieties while at the same